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# Security Council

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## Letter dated 22 June 2000 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Ethiopia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a "Memorandum of the Government of Ethiopia on the Situation Facing Ethiopian Nationals in Eritrea", issued on 22 June 2000 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Fesseha A. **Tessema**
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## Annex to the letter dated 22 June 2000 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Ethiopia addressed to the President of the Security Council

## Memorandum of the Government of Ethiopia on the Situation Facing Ethiopian Nationals in Eritrea

1. Persistent acts of reprisal and racist incitement against Ethiopian nationals residing in Eritrea by the Eritrean Government in violation of international humanitarian law are a matter of extreme gravity and require urgent attention.

2. Reports have been received over the past few weeks that thousands of Ethiopians have been rounded up by the Eritrean authorities and herded into concentration camps around Asmara and other localities under extremely harsh conditions. The Eritrean authorities themselves do not deny their actions although they attempt to camouflage the distress that they have caused. For the most part, the International Committee of the Red Cross or other concerned agencies have not been provided access to most Ethiopian nationals, which has ensured that Ethiopians in Eritrea continue to face the most inhuman conditions. Already some reports of these conditions have been confirmed in the international media. There are also reports of killings of Ethiopian nationals in Eritrea, while the rest languish in detention in various prisons for the simple reason that they are Ethiopians.

3. What is also disturbing is the fact that in addition to the crimes referred to above, an intensive campaign of hatred and incitement against Ethiopian nationals in Eritrea is being carried out unabated. In recent days a call has been made for the internment of Ethiopians in the same way German citizens in the territories of the allied Powers were treated during the Second World War. This hate campaign is under way at a time when the ICRC continues to be denied access — as in the past two years — to Ethiopian prisoners of war in Eritrea. The international community is aware that Eritrean prisoners of war in Ethiopia have been visited regularly by the ICRC consistent with Ethiopia's commitments under international humanitarian law.

4. The grave and perilous situation in which Ethiopians find themselves in Eritrea is a matter of urgent concern to the Ethiopian Government. The conduct of the Eritrean authorities is a flagrant violation of all norms and principles of international law as well as provisions in the OAU peace proposals dealing with the need to put an end to measures "directed against the civilian population" and to refrain from "any action which can cause further hardship and suffering to each other's nationals".

5. For Eritrea's leaders to take such uncalled-for and cruel measures at a stage in the peace process when both sides have signed an agreement for the cessation of hostilities is particularly callous and deserving of the condemnation of the international community.

6. In the light of these grave dangers facing Ethiopians in Eritrea, the Ethiopian Government has felt compelled to draw the attention of the OAU to the following steps that need to be taken to protect the safety of Ethiopian nationals in Eritrea:

- Immediate and unhindered access for the ICRC and other humanitarian agencies to Ethiopians in concentration camps in Eritrea;

- Visit by an international mission to these concentration camps;
- Immediate repatriation to Ethiopia through the ICRC of Ethiopians in concentration camps in Eritrea wishing to leave, as well as other Ethiopians wishing to do so;
- Regular access for the ICRC to Ethiopian prisoners of war (POWs) in Eritrea in accordance with international humanitarian law;
- Full access for the ICRC to all prisons in Eritrea where thousands of Ethiopians are held without charge or trial only because they are Ethiopians, and their immediate repatriation to Ethiopia;
- Cessation of all hate and racist propaganda against Ethiopian nationals in Eritrea.

7. While the foregoing has already been submitted by the Government of Ethiopia formally to the OAU, Ethiopia calls also on the international community at large to understand the gravity of the situation and act accordingly.